Chief of Engineers Recommends Proceeding with Coastal Louisiana Ecosystem Restoration

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Army's Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Carl A. Strock, has approved a Chief of Engineers Report that recommends proceeding with the restoration of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) ecosystem. He has also signed a partnering agreement with the Governor of Louisiana, Kathleen B. Blanco, for restoring the ecosystem.

LTG Strock described this effort by saying, "We have made every effort to develop solutions that aid restoration and that are sustainable in the long term using the best available science and engineering. Our approach also includes flexibility by embedding an adaptive environmental assessment and management framework in our approach."

LTG Strock is providing his report to the Secretary of the Army for review and submission to Congress. He has recommended that the Congress approve the Coastal Louisiana Restoration Plan and provide conditional authorization for the near term critical restoration features.

Strategies for restoring the ecosystem include:

- Freshwater and sediment re-introductions by diverting some Mississippi River flows into hydrologic basins;
- Barrier island restoration through placement of sand from offshore sources or the Mississippi River to sustain key geomorphic structures. This would help protect the ecology of estuarine bays and marshes by reducing gulf influences as well as protect nationally important water bird nesting areas;
- Hydrologic modifications to help restore salinity and marsh inundation patterns and provide fishery access in previously unavailable habitats; and
- Creating a marsh platform for habitat in areas near existing navigation channels through the beneficial use of maintenance dredging material.

The LCA ecosystem restoration plan contains seven components:

- Five Near-Term Critical Restoration Features that have significant engineering efforts already underway;
- Ten Near-Term Critical Restoration Features recommended for study and future congressional authorization;
- Science and Technology Program to reduce scientific and technological uncertainties and optimize attainment of LCA Program restoration objectives;

- Science and Technology Program Demonstration Projects to resolve critical areas of scientific, technical, or engineering uncertainty while providing meaningful restoration benefits whenever possible;
- Programmatic Authorization for the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material to restore, protect, and create aquatic and wetland habitats in connection with construction or maintenance dredging of an authorized project;
- Programmatic Authorization for Investigations of Modifications of Existing Structures and/or their operation management plans to improve environmental performance; and
- Large-Scale and Long-Term Concepts Requiring Detailed Study to determine their potential for achieving restoration objectives beyond the critical needs, near-term focus of other LCA Plan components.

The total cost of the near-term plan is $1.9 billion. The estimated first cost of measures now recommended for authorization is $1,123,300,000, which would be cost-shared $740,050,000 federal and $383,250,000 non-federal. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources will be the non-federal cost-sharing sponsor.

Additional information on the LCA Study is available at www.lca.gov.